

NEWSBYTES

April 27, 2022

No. 1064

Since 2001

A ministry of Calvary Chapel of Appleton

“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

New Social Credit System In Italy Could Lead To ‘Serious Violations Of Rights,’ Spark Dangerous Trend



By [Breanna Claussen](#)

April 23, 2022

Following Rome, the Italian city of Bologna recently announced plans to implement a pilot program for a social credit system, which will reward citizens for what they call “virtuous” behavior. The municipal administration, including the city’s mayor, Matteo Lepore, and “digital agenda” director, Massimo Bugani,

presented the controversial “Smart Citizen Wallet” on March 29th at a press conference on digital innovation.

According to reports, the “Smart Citizen Wallet” currently has a strong focus on “promoting climate-friendly behavior” and will reward citizens for things such as recycling, taking public transportation, avoiding tickets, and managing energy usage. A person’s score will then provide them with benefits such as discounts, cultural activities, and more.

Despite the city’s insistence that “no one will be forced to participate” in the social credit system, many are sounding the alarm about the dangers of its implementation, saying it could easily be expanded and abused by governing authorities.

After learning of the city’s intention to implement the system, Privacy Network, an Italian organization that seeks to “bring privacy and digital rights—to the general public,” issued a statement warning about the legal, ethical, and social ramifications of the “Smart Citizen Wallet.”

“These practices, if poorly developed or used, can also lead to serious limitations and violations of citizens’ rights and freedoms, as well as discriminatory practices, also pursued through technological

means, such as ‘social credit’ systems (or social scoring),” the statement stressed. “Our concern is increased by the fact that similar systems have already been introduced in other Italian cities as well; first of all in Rome, where the Smart Citizen Wallet is already being tested.”

Many are comparing the “Smart Citizen Wallet” to China’s social credit system, which punishes and rewards members of society based on what they determine to be good or bad conduct.

According to *The Hill*, “China’s social credit system is a combination of government and business surveillance that gives citizens a ‘score’ that can restrict the ability of individuals to take actions — such as purchasing plane tickets, acquiring property or taking loans — because of behaviors.”

An Italian author, Beatrice Silenzi, warned that potentially under the Italian system, as is already the case in China, “citizens will be assessed on the basis of obedience to the municipal administration.”

The well-scoring person “will become a Serie A citizen, enjoying greater rights than everyone else,” Silenzi cautioned.

Concern is mounting that more regions and governments will soon decide to jump on the bandwagon by adopting their own social credit systems to supposedly battle various “social issues.”

Similar to the new Italian pilot program, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Mastercard joined forces in 2021 under the guise of combating so-called “climate change,” to create their own social credit system.

The UNFCCC and Mastercard designed a new kind of credit card, which received overflowing praise from the World Economic Forum, that helps users take “responsibility for every transaction” by having their spending monitored and cut off when their “carbon max” has been reached.

Examining Biblical Prophecy sheds startling light on the question of whether a social credit system will be used and abused by governments in the future.

In the book of Revelation, the Bible warns readers that a global government will form on earth in the future and that its leader will restrict the rights of citizens to buy and sell based on their submission to him and his government (Rev. 13). This leader, the “antichrist,” will demand that “all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” worship him and accept his “mark” during the seven-year tribulation:

Revelation 13:16-17 KJV – “And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

The implementation of social credit scoring systems, the globalists’ push toward “abandon[ing] the traditional system of money” in exchange for digital, and the public conditioning to accept such government overreach, should be eye-opening. It demonstrates that this antichrist system, described in Scripture, is brazenly at the door.

As Christian author Jonathan Brentner recently explained, amid all of the agenda-driven deception, there is good news for those who know Christ and have accepted His free gift of Salvation.

“The good news is that the Lord will come for us before the start of the Tribulation and the appearance of the antichrist upon the world scene,” he underscored. “All of those in Christ will miss all of the wrath of the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11), this is the assurance of biblical prophecy.”

Jesus tells Christians, “when these things **begin to come to pass**, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

The FBI is spending millions on social media tracking software

By Aaron Schaffer

FBI Director Christopher Wray should testify to Congress about the contract, says Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

Social media users seemed to foreshadow the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol — and the FBI apparently missed it.

Now, the FBI is doubling down on tracking social media posts, spending millions of dollars on thousands of licenses to powerful social media monitoring technology that privacy and civil liberties advocates say raise serious concerns.

The FBI has contracted for 5,000 licenses to use Babel X, a software made by Babel Street that lets users search social media sites within a geographic area and use other parameters. The contract began March 30 and is worth as much as \$27 million. The FBI has already agreed to pay an IT vendor around \$5 million for the first year of the contract, procurement records indicate. The contract has not previously been reported.

The Justice Department has previously had Babel X in its arsenal, contracting records show. But the new contract appears to be by far the most the agency has ever shelled out for the software, and is one of the largest contracts for the software by a civilian agency, experts said.

- “It's both per-year the biggest I'm aware of in terms of obligation, and it's also the fact that it's a five-year contract,” said Jack Poulson, who runs the research advocacy group Tech Inquiry. “So if you combine those two things, it's the biggest Babel Street contract I'm aware of.”

And while it's not clear what exactly the contract entails, contracting documents provide a blueprint for the FBI's aspirations for the technology. Babel Street and IT vendor Panamerica Computers didn't respond to requests for comment about the terms of the contract.

“The FBI uses social media tools to search publicly available information pertinent to predicated investigations in order to identify and respond to threats of violence, acts of terrorism, and potential federal violations within the scope of the FBI's mission,” the FBI said in a statement after this story was first published.

Political fallout

Social media monitoring is still controversial on Capitol Hill, where the contract could be scrutinized by lawmakers in both parties. Some Democrats are anxious about creeping government surveillance,

while Republicans have focused on the idea that the government could be monitoring political speech.

Rep. Jim Jordan (Ohio), top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, told The Cybersecurity 202 that he's calling for a briefing by the FBI on the issue.

- Jordan said he has "real concerns based on the [FBI's] history and based on the fact that we don't know how they're using it and who they're going after," noting that he'd like FBI Director Christopher A. Wray to testify before the committee so he can get answers about the contract, NSO Group's Pegasus spyware and other issues.

The FBI's asks

The FBI awarded the contract for 5,000 Babel X licenses after telling contractors it wanted software to "gather information" from "Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Deep/Dark Web, VK and Telegram."

- Also on the list: The FBI listed a slew of "preferable" — but not required — platforms, including 8Kun, Discord, Gab, Parler, Reddit, Snapchat, TikTok and Weibo.
- Inclusion of conservative-preferred social media networks Gab and Parler on that list could also draw Republican attention on Capitol Hill.

In contracting documents, the FBI estimates that its 5,000 licensees will run around 20,000 keyword searches every month, though it cautioned that that's "merely an estimate." (For context, the FBI last year got funding for around 36,000 employees — including around 13,000 special agents and 3,000 intelligence analysts.)

In its contracting documents, the FBI reiterates that it only wants access to publicly available information, "meaning no logins or court orders are required to access them." Tools searching for such information "provide critical information without being intrusive because the data they return is publicly available," the FBI said in a document.

Surveillance practices

At first glance, the FBI seems to have a point: Why would it be a privacy violation to analyze and probe information that anyone can see?

But: the FBI will be looking at a vast amount of data as part of the contract, with contracting documents asking for searches and translation abilities in at least seven foreign languages, along with geofencing and even analyzing emotions and sentiments to "be able to determine likely attitudes of the targets." It also added other features, like emoji searches, "predictive analytics" and bot detection, as being optional but desired.

"Five-thousand licenses for social media monitoring in real time means that thousands of FBI agents will be looking for key words and topics on an ongoing basis with social media surveillance targeting at least eight languages," said Greg Nojeim, a senior counsel and co-director at the Center for Democracy and Technology's Security and Surveillance Project. "The risk of misinterpretation is high. So is the risk that an FBI agent who misinterpreted what you said on social media will come knocking on your door."

"It turns out that people dismissed as paranoid because they thought Big Brother was watching everything they say on social media were not paranoid after all," Nojeim said.

The efficacy of features that claim to analyze online sentiments is also unclear. “There is little evidence that sentiment analysis which is part of the project is at all accurate,” said Faiza Patel, who co-directs the Brennan Center for Justice’s Liberty and National Security Program.

Concerns

Matt Cagle, a staff attorney at the ACLU of Northern California, said social media surveillance raises civil liberties concerns even if the surveillance is focused on public posts and profiles.

- “The First Amendment protects online speech, period,” he said. “People should not have to exercise their free speech behind privacy settings in order to avoid being surveilled.”
- The FBI's guidelines are “so lax that they permit this social media surveillance even in ‘assessments’ when the FBI lacks the scintilla of evidence of crime that it needs to open a preliminary investigation,” Nojeim said.

The FBI says its “intent is to analyze past events,” although it also wants to continuously run “persistent,” automated searches as often as every eight minutes, the documents show. In the documents, the FBI said a “predictive analytics” feature — to “point toward possible actions of a subject or group” — would be “desirable.”

That’s also cause for concern, Cagle said.

“The government also wants the ability to predict the future based on social media posts — not only is this impossible, in all likelihood it will risk further bias and harm against the same people that the government has historically mislabeled as suspicious, including movement leaders, immigrants and members of religious and ethnic minorities,” he said.

What a Time to Be Alive and Well

By Edwin Tan

There is still a segment of believers who simply cannot stomach the fact that they are living in astounding prophetic moments. The great prophets of the Old Testament, as well as the early Church Fathers, longed for these unravelings, which are at an incredible warp speed. They passed on way before the very roots of what is happening ever displayed their green shoots. Those who are alive and have all their vital signs in good order would be arguably that cohort in the pages of history that witnesses living Bible prophecy!

Perhaps some of them came across the Olivet Discourse during their Sunday School years. They probably shrugged off what the Saviour said and probably discounted heavily the prospect of being alive at these times. Maybe they would not live to see this seemingly scary stuff. Ironically speaking, they are alive and in great shape, while wars accompanied by rumours of wars stare point-blank at both retinas. None of them are comatose when they hear of an imminent economic collapse of worldwide proportions and a looming threat of a global famine!

These folks will momentarily look back at the wonder years which they were part of, but more so their dearly departed who avoided present-day nasties — these people have had it seemingly

much better! Parents, grandparents, and even great grandparents savored a portion of history that would be sorely missed. Life then was relatively more than decent when compared to current-day deficiencies. So many could only wonder at and ponder the prospect of living to see more deprivations as the scourge of the Great Reset looms large. Enough to make some wish they were born in the days of stagecoaches! Envy those who went home early because of a ravaging brain tumor, if not a fatal car crash at the hands of a drunk at the wheel?

Hang on a second there! You folks are missing something – big time. That is what the author of confusion so ordered; he is making you run the needless gauntlet of so-called shattered dreams and hopes. By what standards? Earthly! Treasures on earth that are poised to be stolen by a cabal of very wicked people. On this very sad note, the genuine hope has been suppressed and denied — this happens when the emphasis is worldly versus the good spiritual!

To make sense of what is really going on and at the same time benefit fully, there is only one thing — connect with God! When one is closely connected with the Lord, the Holy Spirit is there to minister to us, giving us a fascinatingly different lens with respect to the current ominous backdrop.

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

It would not even cost a dime for the deep things of our Heavenly Father to be revealed to us. This is really awesome material; there is enough muscle to shatter existing mindsets. At this juncture, lingering memories lose their relevance when long-held viewpoints are pummeled by the many truths which emanate from the Spirit of God. We can definitely have a uniquely inspirational glimpse of the immediate future — never missing out on the numerous silver linings amidst the darkening.

There is absolutely no need to wallow in hopelessness which everything associated with the fallen planet is only available. The father of lies only tells everybody that there is doom and gloom, which makes living pointless. But the Way, the Truth and the Life says so very differently — there are great and mighty things which are possible. This being the case even in gravity-defying fashion in these times.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:12-14).

Wise up, brothers and sisters in the Lord; do not fall for the snare the enemy has set. Be aware of one thing; these things tell us that the moment of redemption is really close — so look up as eternity draweth nigh (Luke 21:28). It is not like what you experienced so far — everything having

a shelf life, if not expiration date. The joy which no words can express and describe is forever! Do not look back but gaze forward.

Maranatha

Edwin